

Know Your Enemies!

Is it a cold, the flu, or anthrax?

Many illnesses begin with influenza (flu)-like symptoms, which include fever, tiredness, and a dry cough. And most are not caused by flu — or by anthrax. Because these symptoms can be caused by many diseases, it can be difficult to tell what caused you to become sick. Your best protection against the flu is an annual flu shot.

You should especially get this protection if you are 65 years old or older, or have certain medical conditions that put you at high risk of flu-related complications. The flu shot can prevent illness caused by influenza but cannot prevent flu-like illness caused by other diseases.

	Cold	Influenza (Flu)	Inhalational Anthrax
Illness	Respiratory (breathing) illness caused by viruses	Respiratory (breathing) illness caused by influenza viruses	Respiratory (breathing) illness caused by anthrax bacteria
Treatment	Treat symptoms. Does not respond to antibiotics.	Antiviral flu medications started in the first 2 days of illness can reduce the severity and duration of influenza illness.	Antibiotics are recommended.
Vaccine	None	Annual flu shots can reduce your risk of getting the flu.	Vaccine recommended only for military personnel and certain other groups who's jobs (e.g., laboratory workers) put them at risk.
Transmission	Easily spread from person to person when an infected person touches someone else or sneezes or coughs.	Easily spread from person to person when an infected person sneezes or coughs.	Cannot be spread from person to person.
Symptoms			
<i>Fever at or above 100°F</i>	Uncommon in adults and older children	Usual and can last 3 to 4 days	Usual
<i>Headache</i>	Usual	Usual with sudden onset, and can be severe	Sometimes
<i>Muscle Aches</i>	Mild	Usual, and often severe	Sometimes
<i>Tiredness and Exhaustion</i>	Mild	Usual with sudden onset, can be severe, and can last 2 or more weeks	Usual
<i>Runny Nose</i>	Usual	Usual	Rare
<i>Cough</i>	Usual	Usual, and can become severe	Usual
<i>Chest Discomfort</i>	Uncommon	Uncommon	Usual
<i>Vomiting</i>	Uncommon	Uncommon in adults but more likely in very young children	Usual

Information derived from the November 9th MMWR article: Notice to Readers: Considerations for Distinguishing Influenza-Like Illness from Inhalational Anthrax Vol 50, No 44; 986-6 11/09/2001

For more information, ask your health care provider or contact the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Website www.cdc.gov/nip/flu

Immunization Hotline

English 1-800-232-2522 ! Spanish 1-800-0233 ! Hearing Impaired 1-800-243-7889

